

**Japanese Colonial
Education in
Taiwan, 1895-1945**

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In 1895 the Japanese arrived in Taiwan with two-and-a-half decades of building a modern education system behind them. With this experience, they began to construct a colonial school system modeled upon the one that was rapidly maturing in the home islands. As in Meiji Japan, Taiwan's education was to consist of a large base of public elementary schools for the general populace topped by a small number of specialized institutions for a select few. In their first colony, the Japanese were determined to match the impressive record their nation-building efforts were creating at home.¹

The basic approach was the same in Japan and Taiwan. Education was a servant of the state. Its largest task, that of universal elementary schooling, was twofold. It was to unite the entire population psychologically and instill loyalty to the state in each of its members, and at the same time to provide them with the discipline, skills, and attitudes Japan's version of modernization required of its people. With appropriate socialization and preparation to enter a labor force, Japanese and Taiwanese schoolchildren would both become effective instruments of Japan's national goals.

But Taiwan was a colony and its people, although of the same Asian stock and with a partially-shared cultural heritage, were not Japanese. The Taiwanese not only lacked any kind of emotional commitment to Japan; they were entirely unfamiliar with everything the Japanese state represented. While this was not completely unlike the mentality of many ordinary Japanese before the Meiji Restoration, even the least nationalistic of late Tokugawa commoners would probably have been easier material for modern Japanese educators to work with.² For one thing, despite important linguistic variations, people from different parts of the Japanese islands shared a common language.

Realizing that they faced challenges far greater than those of early Meiji, the Japanese in Taiwan wondered if the Japanese language could be used to unify and nationalize the Taiwanese too. Officials debated this question, but to Izawa Shuji there was really no choice. He had already decided upon Japanese language-education before he left Japan. When a British Presbyterian missionary, who had been teaching in Taiwan for twelve years and had found it necessary to teach in the native languages (although he had tried instruction in English at first), urged him to educate in the vernacular, Izawa only became more adamant.³ Vernacular education might have imparted new skills and knowledge, but would it have encouraged identification with Japan? As a student of colonial education in British Malaya noted:

Through the vernacular the child, to begin with, enters into the thought and feeling of those with whom he is most closely linked both in the home and in the village; through the vernacular he also enters into the minds of those who, in song and story, have given voice to their deepest and inmost thoughts; through the vernacular he becomes heir to the social customs and ceremonies of his people. Thus the child comes to value his mother tongue not only as a medium of self-expression, but also as the means whereby he can secure for himself all that is worthy of his loyalty and devotion to his cultured past . . . It is the vehicle he chooses for the expression of his highest thoughts and feelings and of the loftiest heights of his imagination. It is rare for great literary heights, particularly in poetry, to be reached by writers using a foreign tongue . . . It can be stated without hesitation that no system of the highest and most natural development of the individual can afford to exclude the vernacular at any stage of progress.⁴

However, the Japanese in Taiwan were less interested in "the highest and most natural development of the individual" than they were in the highest development in each individual of loyalty to Japan. They wanted to detach each Taiwanese from any past he or she might perceive. Vernacular education in Taiwan would have meant Chinese education. And the Chinese intellectual tradition might well have challenged some Japanese goals.

On the other hand, administrators like Coto Shimpei and Mochiji Rokusaburo were aware of the dangers of replacing old traditions with new aspirations. The new education was not to encourage natives to rise above their stations in colonial life. The

pupils were not to think that they were equal to their Japanese teachers—at least not for a long, long time. A critic of English education in India has described the kind of situation which Taiwan's colonial administrators worked hard to avoid: "The educated Indian became abashed of the language his parents spoke, of their dress, their manners and traditions. He would not return to the village but sought a life in the society he had learned to admire."³

Repeatedly, measures were taken to keep the common school curriculum suitable for a predominantly rural clientele who would take up the same occupations as their parents. Loyalty, filial piety, obedience to legitimate authority—all found within the Chinese Confucian tradition—were emphasized with this end in view. At the same time, great efforts were made to instill a very non-Confucian idea in Taiwanese schoolchildren. This was that manual labor was a dignified and honorable pastime for a scholar as well as for anyone else. Again and again, educational authorities urged teachers to show that the man who worked with his head also worked with his hands. Children were taught to clean and tidy their schoolrooms and to work in their school vegetable patches. Japanese teachers were commanded to set good examples for the children to copy.

Japanese administrators reasoned that higher education, especially in law, literature, politics, and philosophy, would encourage unrest and even rebellion. Therefore it was to be avoided as much as possible. Apparently this was the lesson they drew from their studies of earlier and contemporary Western colonialism, but they could have learned as much from watching higher education in Japan.⁴ Irresistible Taiwanese demands for higher education were to be channeled into professional studies which would produce the kind of trained natives the colony required. Thus, during the first decades of colonial rule, higher education for Taiwanese meant either normal school or medical school.

This attitude was not at all like that of British administrators in India in the middle of the nineteenth century, who thought that higher education in English would turn Indians opposed to British rule into enthusiastic supporters of it.

The young men, brought up at our seminaries, turn with contempt from the barbarous despotisms under which their ancestors groaned, to the prospect of improving their national institutions

on the English model. Instead of regarding us with dislike, they court our society, and look upon us as their natural protectors and benefactors: the summi of their ambition is to resemble us. . . . So far from the idea of driving the English into the sea uppermost in their minds, they have no notion but such as rivets their connection with the English, and makes them dependent on English protection and instruction.⁵

wrote Charles Trevelyan of the Bengal Civil Service in 1838.

Unlike the British, the Japanese did not particularly want to replace one high culture with another. They did not wish to substitute Japanese philosophy or science for Chinese classical learning. Their main concern was to give a rudimentary education to a much larger number of Taiwanese than had ever gone to school before.

What the Japanese Achieved

Implementation of the hopes for elementary education was, on the whole, fairly successful. Although the common schools probably convinced more Taiwanese of the importance of boiling drinking water and washing one's hands after using the toilet than of the majesty of the Japanese emperor, by the end of the period these schools were touching the lives of even rather humble islanders. There were failures. Considerable wastage occurred in the common school system. Many who entered the first grade did not finish, probably because, as in Burma, when children were old enough to be useful many parents kept them home.⁶ And in poor areas common schools, patronized only by a handful of children of the local well-to-do, stood apart from the main stream of community life.⁷ For many common school graduates there were difficulties in retaining language and other skills while living and working in an all-Taiwanese environment.⁸ Despite superficial influence in some spheres of Taiwanese life, the overall record of Japanese elementary education, in terms of the number of people it reached and what it taught them, is impressive. By the end of the colonial period it had gained widespread acceptance. Indeed, the limitations of common schooling during the last part of the Japanese period stem at least as much from government-general reluctance to increase investment in common schools as from Taiwanese attitudes toward these schools.

The resolution to curb higher education was much harder to

carry out. As the years passed, Taiwanese pressure for advanced schooling became increasingly difficult to resist. Reluctantly administrators concluded in 1915 that it was probably less dangerous to tolerate a secondary academic school for natives within the colony than to drive ambitious young Taiwanese to Japan. And when the economy proved ready to absorb indigenous paraprofessionals and technicians, an autocratic governor-general managed to initiate and expand vocational studies at secondary school and college levels despite resistance from old Taiwan hands. Shortly afterwards, when the policy of assimilation was announced and the 1922 education rescript was promulgated, this too was partly in response to Taiwanese pressure for higher education.

Officials claimed that the 1922 edict abolished all ethnic discrimination in the schools, in accord with the accelerated assimilation policy. But Taiwanese knew better. Assimilation under Den, in spite of his hopes and reforms, still meant assimilation chiefly at the bottom of Japanese society, just as it had meant under Akashi. Elementary school lessons for Taiwanese were still rewritten to delete tales of humble Japanese who rose to dizzy heights. Taiwanese who could afford it still sent their offspring to Japan to study, because it was easier for Taiwanese to enter Japan's first-rate colleges and universities than to gain admission to the integrated institutions of the colony. Official insistence that discrimination had been abolished only increased the resentment of Taiwanese intellectuals, especially among those who could not afford to go to Japan to study.

In India, British education soon mocked Charles Trevelyan's optimism, as from its embrace emerged forces for a militant anti-British movement.¹¹ Ironically, in Taiwan, where authorities had tried hard to withhold the higher education Trevelyan recommended for natives, many highly educated islanders responded much as Trevelyan had expected the Indians to do. Of course, while British education in India usually meant liberal arts, most Taiwanese intellectuals were products of specialized professional training. In the British colony "the study of English history and political theory indoctrinated the native intelligentsia with ideals and aspirations incompatible with the existing political order in India."¹² Educated Taiwanese had usually been prepared for careers in medicine, pedagogy, applied science, or commerce. Even so, before the period was out hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Taiwanese had studied such subjects as law, literature, arts,

political science, economics, philosophy, and pure science mainly in the colleges and universities of Japan. Among these people, too, alienation from their rulers seems to have been comparatively weak.

Consequences for the Taiwanese

What consequences did Japanese education have for the Taiwanese identity? They were perhaps not very significant for the majority of the population. In the villages Chinese patterns of family and community life continued. Intergroup warfare, common before 1895, no longer existed but old allegiances remained, as did ethnic subgroup separations that were reinforced by differences in dialect and custom. However, the Japanese presence often softened the edge of these divisions, especially in the cities where working-class Taiwanese from all quarters of the island lived together. Since most of the Japanese resided in the cities, differences between Taiwanese and Japanese lifestyles were most visible there. Thus urban experience may have aided formation of a "Taiwanese consciousness" among city Taiwanese of all classes. At the same time, most of the modern improvements associated with the Japanese were in the cities and the Japanese atmosphere was strongest there. The Taihoku teacher's explanation of his pupils' blessings as Japanese subjects must have seemed less remote than the same message when preached in village schools.

The relationship between Japanese education and the identity of the Taiwanese middle and upper classes is a much more complex problem. Certainly Taiwanese intellectuals educated during the colonial period absorbed at least an overlay of Japanization. But how deep did the overlay go and what was at the core?

Much of the Taiwanese experience would have been familiar to other nationals who acquired higher education under a colonial regime. In many ways the Taiwanese student in Tokyo was cousin to young Indo-Chinese in Paris and Indians in London. Happy or not with their situation, these intellectuals had entered the dominating country's culture. Like colonized elites elsewhere, even Taiwanese intellectuals who opposed Japanese rule sometimes clung to Japanese institutions and values.

But the cleavage between the 1920s or 1930s student in Tokyo and most of his three and a half or four million compatriots at home probably was not as severe as the gap that separated West-

ern-educated Indians, Indochinese, Indonesians, and Africans from the masses in their countries. Indeed, as Taiwan's administrators were so fond of pointing out, Taiwanese and Japanese were both Asian peoples and did share some common traditions. But perhaps by the 1920s or 1930s it was equally important that the Taiwanese university or college student in Japan had begun his or her education with the same or a similar curriculum as that with which a large number of Taiwanese of all classes as well as nearly all Japanese had become acquainted. Western colonial school systems, on the other hand, tended to be composed of different kinds of schools for different groups or classes of natives at each level of schooling. At the elementary level especially, these included a variety of vernacular schools, partly vernacular schools, and schools which taught in the language of the colonial ruler.¹⁴ Many of them were vastly different in kind as well as in standard from European schools, but ambitious natives often were expected to move from such institutions into more Westernized schools at a postprimary level.¹⁵ And the educational link was not the only factor that made the Taiwanese intellectual seem less an outsider in metropolis or colony. Under fifty years of Japanese colonialism life in Taiwan generally became much closer to life in Japan than was the case in any colony under Western rule.¹⁶ Perhaps because of this, educated Taiwanese were spared some of the anguish of the assimilated intellectual caught between two worlds.¹⁷

Contact with Chinese students in Japan, experiences on the Chinese mainland where schools became fairly accessible to them after 1920, and China's epoch-making modern history itself brought many Taiwanese intellectuals closer to their Chinese heritage. Yet they continued to feel at home in other places, comfortably moving back and forth among Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese colleagues. Affinity with China was part of the anti-colonial movement, despite government hostility toward identification with China, but the movement contained a local, Taiwanese content too. For Taiwanese intellectuals who rejected Japanese imperialism, Chinese influences were often germane. However, the identity of these men and women was by no means primarily a national one.

While the deeper question of cultural or national identity cannot be answered definitely, it is clear that Japanese education brought decisive change into the lives of all classes of Taiwanese.

Schools were effective innovators because they were an integral part of a parcel that contained other instruments of change—railroads, telegraphs, post offices, streamlined landholding arrangements, agriculture testing stations, hydroelectric works, agricultural cooperatives, factories, banks, law courts, hospitals and clinics, policemen, and the *koko* system. Of course the educational impact was greater among some groups than among others.

The Taiwanese opposition to Japanese rule which emerged after 1920 was also a product of Japanese education. After a taste of a freer life in the ruling country, returning students understandably found the restrictions placed upon them in colonial society harder to bear. In addition, Taiwanese who never left the island reacted against discrepancies between schoolbook descriptions of the Japanese empire and the realities of colonial life. Yet, despite their restlessness and resentment, Japanese-educated islanders did not necessarily reject the world their conquerors had created; schools in Taiwan and Japan tended to turn out less aggressive rebels than did study in China. Police repression also helped keep the anticolonial movement in legal channels, but a large proportion of the discontented were genuinely more interested in acquiring bigger shares of existing economic, political, and social rewards than in fundamentally disturbing the status quo. The paucity of native content in school curricula irritated them, but generally they lashed out at the sugarbowl education provisions for their children, in comparison with what was offered to colonial Japanese, rather than at the education system itself.

The Changing Status of Women

One group for whom Japanese education meant particularly radical change was the female half of the Taiwanese population. Nothing in Chinese high or folk culture supported public education for females. Yet, as Table 13 in Chapter Seven illustrates, by 1935 one quarter of the Taiwanese female elementary school-aged population was in school, and nine years later this percentage had jumped to 60. They studied the same curriculum as their brothers, and although textbooks did deal with differences in boys' and girls' roles, a surprising amount of the books' didactic content was addressed to both sexes.¹⁸ Pictures and stories in readers and ethics books portrayed both sexes doing similar

things: little boys as well as little girls could be found doing domestic tasks, like caring for an ill mother or sweeping up rubbish. In elementary school and at higher girls' school Taiwanese girls became as enthusiastic participants as their brothers in gymnastics, track and field, swimming, tennis, basketball, and volleyball. During the latter half of the period the high Taiwanese demand for higher girls' school shows how acceptable female education had become, for although attendance at such a school could help one acquire credentials as a teacher, for many it was essentially a finishing school experience.

Increased schooling for girls was closely related to other new directions for women. An end to footbinding and entrance into the colony's industrial work force were two important changes. For twenty years the government encouraged Taiwanese to give up the custom of binding women's feet to produce a "filly-foot" of approximately half the normal size, a practice common in China since at least the Sung dynasty (960-1126). But officials concentrated on supporting native efforts, aware that this reform would be most effective if initiated by islanders themselves.

In 1900 the administration backed a natural foot society organized by a traditional medical practitioner named Huang Ya-chieh. Governor-General Kodama himself honored the society by attending its first large meeting, and later by presenting members (who were men who had sworn not to allow their sons to marry girls with bound feet) with silk sashes upon which, in his own calligraphy, he "wrote the Confucian maxim that filial piety began with our not daring to injure our persons."¹⁰ Huang's argument for giving up the custom was both traditional and revolutionary. He wanted women to be better able to serve their families and menfolk in familiar ways, but he also suggested that they play new roles. In the society's inaugural address he stated:

Now Taiwan has become a part of the Japanese empire, and the government is carrying out reforms. The Taiwanese are also a people of reform. . . . We must combine striving forward, hoping that women can keep their Heavenly endowments. Natural-footed women can pound the mortar, draw water from the well, and sew garments diligently in the service of their in-laws. Going one step further, they can enter schools to study the Japanese language, embroidery or calligraphy, and perhaps specialize in art.

metic, accounting, science or other fields. If successful, they will create a worthy livelihood and greatly help society by assisting men who are too busy to accomplish certain deeds.¹¹

Huang and his followers made some gains but for at least a decade unbound feet continued to be a popular target of male ridicule. However, by 1914 feeling had grown fairly strong, and Lin Hsien-ting's influential family in Taichai organized another anti-foot-binding society which successfully persuaded hundreds of women to let out their bindings. The following year the authorities decided that such action could be made mandatory: "On the fifteenth of April, an official order of prohibition was issued. The decree was effective and by August more than 763,000 women had obeyed. Recalcitrants were forcibly dealt with, more and more Taiwanese complied, and the custom disappeared, owing to strict government prohibition and the development of public feeling against it."¹²

On unbound feet women moved into the factories and offices that were beginning to appear. In 1914 there were only 21,859 factory workers on the island but about 28 percent of these were female. While the factory work force expanded each year, the female proportion of it did not rise significantly until the late 1930s: in 1938, out of 95,641 factory workers 35,878 or roughly 37 percent were women, and three years later this percentage exceeded 40. More women were employed in some industries than in others. They outnumbered male laborers in the manufacture of woven goods—mainly the fiber hats which became a famous island export. In the largest manufacturing industry, foodstuffs, they amounted to about half the number of men employed by the middle of the 1930s and by 1941 amounted to 50,941 out of a work force of 67,020. But very few women were ever employed in machinery and tool production. Employers preferred factory workers, female as well as male, who had been to school. Educated men vastly outnumbered their female counterparts for decades: it was 1938 before there were even half as many girls in common school as boys. But as the gap narrowed during the last years of colonial rule the proportion of schooled factory workers jumped faster for women than for men.¹³

Schooling was even more important for women seeking jobs in offices and shops. By 1945, 95 percent of the females employed in

offices and shops had been to school and almost all of these were at least common school graduates, while at the very least 38 percent were graduates of higher girls' school, or of equivalent or higher institutions.¹¹ More of these white collar women may have been Japanese than was the case for factory workers, but the bulk of them were native islanders.¹²

Only a few Taiwanese women began careers after completing specialized professional studies, but their importance far exceeded their numbers. As pioneers in prestigious new fields they provided for females role models that had never before existed. Their appearance was probably one of the most radical of all the changes that occurred during the Japanese period. Unfortunately, however, data available on these trail breakers are scanty and imprecise. In educational statistics those who studied in Japan are often hidden away in private schools or miscellaneous school categories. While biographical dictionaries published during the colonial period reveal the educational backgrounds of hundreds of Taiwanese men, in only one entry in one dictionary is the subject a woman.¹³ However, thanks to a Chinese *Who's Who* published in Taiwan during the postcolonial period, and to other sundry scattered sources, it is known that by the end of the period Taiwanese women had been trained both in the colony and in Japan for careers in medicine, midwifery, dentistry, pedagogy, commerce, home economics, ethnics, economics, and science.¹⁴

Most of the highest-ranking female professionals appear to have been trained in Japan, and this in itself was no mean feat. There were very few colleges or other facilities in the ruling country to accommodate the most ambitious of the hundreds of thousands of Japanese girls who were graduating from higher girls' schools by the late 1930s. In 1914 the first three women ever to enter a government university enrolled in Tohoku Imperial. From then on the government universities regularly admitted small numbers of women students, and by the late 1930s at least three or four Taiwanese women had gained entrance.¹⁵ Only two or three of the private universities recognized women and permitted coeducational attendance at lectures; and while in 1937 the Japanese government supported ninety-six universities and higher educational institutions for men, it provided on the highest level only two higher normal schools for women, plus a coeducational music school in Tokyo.¹⁶ There were also fifty specialized

colleges for women in 1937, out of which six were governmental.¹⁷ Competition to enter most women's colleges was stiff, but several hundred Taiwanese women managed to get a college education, many of them in medicine.¹⁸

Employment opportunities were always less generous for professional Japanese women than for their male counterparts. After the Manchurian incident in 1931 which led to a full-scale Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the loud demand of the antimodernist that patriotic Japanese women should first and foremost be "good wives and mothers" made the situation even more difficult.¹⁹ Thus after 1931 Taiwanese graduates of women's colleges had to face not only longstanding islander prejudices against professional women but also a Japanese climate of opinion which was becoming less and less tolerant of them. Given the circumstances, it is amazing that any of them entered professional life.²⁰

Higher education sent Taiwanese women as well as men into politics, in spite of the authorities' disapproval. Individual women were active in both conservative and radical wings of the anti-colonial movement. Although they achieved central leadership roles only in leftist circles, a women's rights movement was an integral part of the moderates' campaigns.

Given the direction the Japanese colonial policies pushed Taiwanese rather ironic that Japanese nation look after 1931. It is rather ironic that Japanese colonial policies pushed Taiwanese women into professional and public life. When the Japanese occupied the Philippines during the course of the Pacific War, they were not entirely happy to find thousands of Philippine women in professional life and hundreds of them elected to public office (they had gained the franchise in 1937). After surveying conditions in this former American colony, they were "forced to conclude that the position which women occupy in the Philippines as a political factor, direct and indirect, cannot be ignored."²¹ But they saw no reason to allow this situation to continue. "The character of political activities of women should be changed," recommended Koyama Masamichi in a report commissioned by the Japanese military administration. He continued:

When the women of the Philippines again turn their attention to matters relating to family, education, nutrition, public health, morality of men, and so forth, they will find in those fields an important mission for them to discharge, apparently negative, but actually distinctly positive. In this sense, the women of the Philip-

piners will profit by the example of their sisters in Japan, who work quietly and unobtrusively in the family and for the neighborhood associations, enabling their husbands to work outside, completely freed from the cares of their families, thus drawing to themselves the unbounded gratitude and respect of their men.⁴³

The Japanese in Comparison to Other Colonial Rulers

In comparison with the educational opportunities other colonial rulers offered the people they dominated, the Japanese in Taiwan were far from niggardly. With the exception of the Americans in the Philippines, no other colonial power in Asia or elsewhere approached native education with anything like the seriousness of purpose of Japanese educators in Taiwan. The care that went into formulating and executing educational plans was outstanding. The Philippines excepted, no colonial education system under a Western flag received such a generous input of funds and skilled personnel.

In Dutch and French colonies the advanced education that selected elites received was famous for its high standards. But the maze of vernacular and European (Chinese, vernacular, and European in Indochina) schools which formed the base of the educational pyramids in Dutch and French colonies made it impossible for all but a very few natives to get the preparation necessary for entrance to the fine schools at the top. And for the general populations, Dutch and French colonial governments provided very little education. When the Dutch left Indonesia after centuries of rule only about 10 percent of the population was literate—one of the lowest rates in the area.⁴⁴ The stringency of elementary schooling in the Netherlands Indies was rivaled only by its counterpart in Indochina.⁴⁵ The story was the same in other parts of the globe: in 1939, after a great increase in elementary school facilities for natives, the French in Morocco were able to boast that about 2 percent of the Moroccan school-aged population was in school.⁴⁶

As colonial educators, the British were more liberal, although the standards of their higher institutions were not considered as excellent as French or Dutch.⁴⁷ In Britain's overseas territories, governments and missionaries tended to concentrate upon the education of the middle and upper classes and to rely upon a principle of downward filtration to reach the masses.⁴⁸ Because public support for education in British colonies commonly took

the form of grants-in-aid to recognized private schools, governments frequently were less directly involved educationally than was the case elsewhere and had greater difficulty ensuring that educational planning remained an integral part of general policy making.⁴⁹ All in all, there was a good deal of laissez-faire in British colonial education. Perhaps this was why British colonial schools frequently failed either to provide people with marketable skills or to foster hoped-for attitudinal change but did succeed in turning out individuals totally unfit for traditional occupations and lifestyles.⁵⁰

Some of the success of Japanese education in Taiwan, as in the Philippines, was because the new rulers took over a people who already possessed a well-established tradition of learning and schooling not completely unlike the one being introduced. Even on the outskirts of the Ch'ing empire, Chinese schools and scholars were teaching the classics to young members of the gentry class, Japanese language, which employed Chinese characters in its script, was not as strange to literate Taiwanese as Western languages might have been. Similarly, in the Philippines, the Americans inherited a land that had acquired a strong taste for learning from the Spanish friars.⁵¹ English, which replaced Spanish as the medium of instruction, was not as different from Spanish as, for instance, a non-European language would have been.⁵²

However, as J. S. Furnivall has illustrated in his study of Burma under the British, a high educational base at the beginning of a colonial period does not guarantee still higher educational levels at the end of the period:

The progress of education under all its forms in Burma during the period between 1925 and 1940 shows a notable contrast with that achieved in neighbouring countries . . . Sixty years ago Upper Burma, under native rule, had far more children at school than any country outside Burma in the tropical Far East; in 1900 Burma as a whole still held the lead, but by 1940 it had sunk to the fifth place, and in respect of institutions managed or helped by Government, was little ahead of Netherlands India, where general public instruction dates only from 1907 . . . It might be claimed sixty years ago that Burma was the best educated country in the tropical Far East, with the possible exception of the Philippines. It would be difficult to repel the charge that at the time of its separation from India it was the worst educated.⁵³

One of Furnivall's shrewdest criticisms of colonial education in South and Southeast Asia was that it did not prepare individuals for "the business of life" but only for "the life of business" few of them would ever pursue.⁴⁴ Colonial educators in Taiwan and the Philippines were exceptional because the school systems they fashioned seriously attempted to prepare their students for "the business of life." American education was meant to prepare the Filipinos for independence; the Japanese was meant to assimilate the Taiwanese completely. In spite of such diametrically opposite goals, public education in the two countries shared a great deal. In no other colonies did rulers devote so much energy to indoctrinating the subject people in their own world view, while at the same time taking extraordinary pains to present this view in a way which would be in harmony with the local environment.⁴⁵

The United States, which at least officially did not intend to rule the Philippines forever, steadily increased native participation in colonial political processes over the years and allowed Filipino critics of American rule to publish freely under a "policy of permitting full semantic outbursts short of acts of sedition."⁴⁶ Thus it does not seem surprising that—unlike nationalist movements under less permissive rulers—Filipino anticolonialism remained within constitutional and legal orbits. What is more astonishing is that in Taiwan, where the political climate was so different, the anticolonial movement should tread similar paths. In Taiwan improved standards of living for many retarded alienation from the regime. But in both countries acceptance of the rulers' education appears to have acted as an important force for moderation in the choice of methods for political protest.

American rulers of the Philippines spent much more of their colony's revenues upon education than did the Japanese in Taiwan. A survey of Philippine education in 1925, for instance, reported that "out of a general government expenditure of slightly more than P 100,000,000 educational contributions from taxes amount to P 23,000,000."⁴⁷ But the Japanese probably expended educational funds more effectively, at least at the lower levels of the school system. The 1925 Philippine survey also reported that 82 percent of Filipino schoolchildren did not get past the fourth grade of the six-year elementary school course, that many dropped out after the first or second grade, and that the average length of time taken to complete four grades was five years.⁴⁸ As late as 1946 Filipino educators reported that only 58 percent of

the country's elementary schoolchildren continued in school after the second grade, and that large numbers of youngsters were repeating grades or taking longer than one year to pass each grade.⁴⁹

Generally, segregation in Western colonial education did not stop at a demarcation between ruler and ruled. With the exception of the American Philippines, most administrations tended to make different qualities of schooling available to different classes or groups of natives.⁵⁰ Dutch schools for natives in Java were organized strictly upon class lines: the offspring of Javanese aristocrats alone were permitted to enter first-class native schools, while a second-class grade of native school accommodated the sons of commoners.⁵¹ Similarly, the British in Malaya established special elite schools for selected Malays of good birth and much more primitive facilities for most of the rest of the population.⁵² Japanese education in Taiwan was much more egalitarian. In the beginning the Japanese made overtures toward the better-educated natives, but a single school system was established for Taiwanese of all classes and no Taiwanese class or group was denied access to it. For some individual Taiwanese families, Japanese education functioned as a vehicle of soaring upward mobility.⁵³ In fact, by the end of the period education had clearly become an important determinant of membership in the island's native middle and upper classes.

But the Japanese claimed too much for this egalitarianism when they declared that after 1922 Taiwanese and Japanese in the colony were treated alike educationally. Abolition of educational discrimination in 1922, they argued, proved that, unlike the racially prejudiced Western nations in Asia, Japan did not discriminate against or exploit the people it ruled. This attitude of self-deception or hypocrisy—or perhaps a combination of the two—remained strong in Japanese government circles long after 1945. As late as 1964 the Japanese foreign ministry published a book which still complacently claimed that Japanese education in Taiwan was aimed at integrating the Taiwanese and raising their cultural level and that the Japanese were unique among colonial rulers because of the abundant educational opportunities they gave the people they ruled.⁵⁴ In actual fact, however, the Japanese in Taiwan were much like other colonizers in their attitudes toward the people they governed. And the Taiwanese, whether or not they were aware of this, knew that Japa-

nese residents in Taiwan showed no signs of willingness to give up their privileged position even after the assimilation policy was in full force.¹⁵

Heritage for Postcolonial Taiwan

The Taiwanese paid dearly for Japanese education, but it did give them some positive assets with which to start postcolonial life.¹⁶ Training of teachers and physicians, urgently needed in developing countries but generally neglected by colonial regimes,¹⁷ was emphasized during Japanese rule in Taiwan. The traditional contempt for manual work, which Gunnar Myrdal found so pernicious and pernicious in South Asian countries, is relatively weak in postcolonial Taiwan.¹⁸

In *Asian Drama* Myrdal has described the type of educated young people he believes developing countries need today: "In their efforts to modernize their economies and adopt advanced technology, the South Asian countries need young people who . . . have functional literacy, mastery of basic mathematics, certain mechanical skills, especially in the use of tools and machinery, a basic knowledge of the sciences and of the world around them, and rational attitudes toward work. Thus prepared they will be adaptable and mobile, ready for advancement."¹⁹ The schools of Taiwan contributed a great deal toward mastery of such skills and formation of such attitudes.

Appendixes

Notes

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